



CURRENT SONG

SUBJECTS: Music, Language Arts, Art, and Social Studies

GRADES: 4-5

KERA GOALS: Meets KERA goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS: Make sense of the various messages to which they listen; make sense of communicated ideas with visual arts; make sense of communicated ideas with music; observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions; recognize, apply, and understand the relationship between people and geography; create works of art and make presentations; analyze their own and others' artistic products; show that they understand how time, place, and society influence the arts and humanities; show their abilities to become self-sufficient individuals; show their abilities to become responsible members of a family, work group, or community; creative thinking skills to develop ideas or products; connect knowledge and experiences from different subject areas; use what they already know to acquire new knowledge, skills, or interpret experiences; and expand their understanding of existing knowledge.

DURATION: One class period of 30 to 45 minutes

GROUP SIZE: One class of 25-35 students (or less)

SETTING: Indoors, or outside with clipboards

KEY VOCABULARY: music, lyrics, traditions, bluegrass

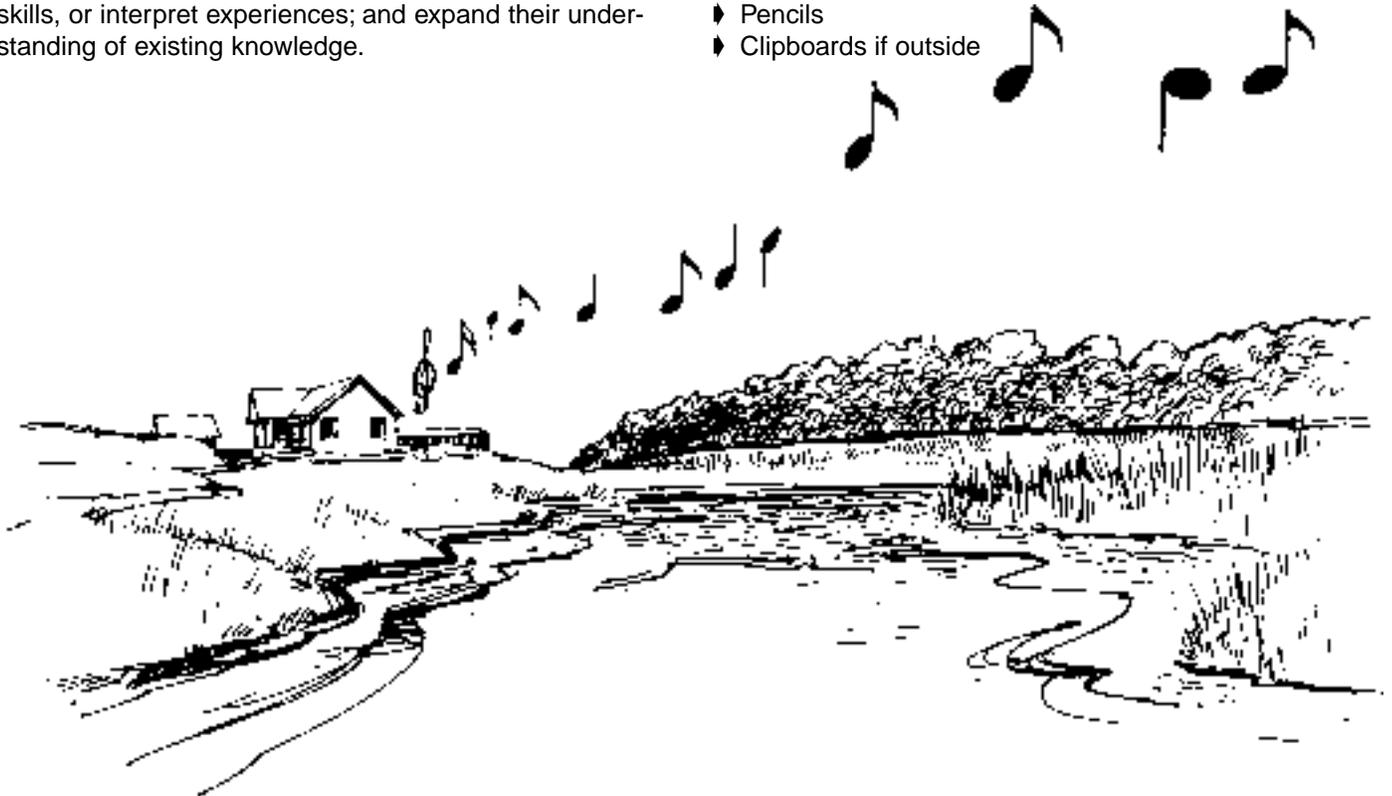
ANTICIPATORY SET: Words often have more than one meaning. Today we are going to listen to a "Current Song." Does anyone have any idea what the song may be about?

OBJECTIVES: The students will be able to:

1) listen to music and identify a feeling or mood; 2) work independently to illustrate a lyric from *Paradise*.

MATERIALS:

- ◆ Tape recorder
- ◆ Recording of *Paradise* by John Prine
- ◆ Tape of bluegrass music
- ◆ Lyric sheets
- ◆ Paper or 5 x 7 index cards
- ◆ Pencils
- ◆ Clipboards if outside



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BACKGROUND: Music is a very common way for people to express their feeling about a place that holds a special meaning. Rivers, including the Green River, have inspired many song writers.

Bluegrass music, a southeast style of music, has a long history. Many people believe that the foundations to this style originated in the Old World, in the British Isles including Ireland and Scotland. In the southeast United States its roots started in the 1940's. The basic principles of the music were fully developed by 1945, when Earl Scrugs joined Bill Monroe's band. Bill Monroe is considered the "Father of Bluegrass music." Bill Monroe and his band, the Bluegrass Boys, played at the Grand Old Opry. As the music gained in popularity and made its way onto radio a name was needed for this new sound. Bluegrass was labeled as a style of music in the 1950's. This music is famous for its lead instruments playing the melody. Lead instruments include the fiddle, mandolin, and five string banjo. The rhythm instruments include acoustic guitar and bass. Voice is characterized by high harmony singing which includes a high tenor part. Some refer to this tenor part as a high lonesome sound. The higher male voice gave bluegrass its distinction and intensity. Bluegrass is also known for giving instrumentalists or voices a chance for improvisation as they go along.

Bluegrass, like most types of music, has floated in and out of popularity. In the 1960's the tv show, the *Beverly Hillbillies* and movies such as *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Deliverance* brought bluegrass out into the "pop culture." The "folk revival" of the 1960's helped to keep Bluegrass in the "pop culture" for over a decade. In the seventies, new artists began to combine rock & roll and bluegrass. The traditional Bluegrass performers did not quickly accept the new style until the early 1980's.

In the mid-1980's the International Bluegrass Music Association originated. Bluegrass today is enjoyed by millions of people in the United States and in dozens of foreign countries including Russia, Japan, Europe, Australia, and Canada. Bluegrass is programmed on more than 900 radio stations worldwide. Over 500 Bluegrass festivals are held throughout the United States every year, one of which is the Bluegrass festival in Owensboro, Kentucky. For more information on Bluegrass music or festivals contact the International Bluegrass Music Association Office in Owensboro, Kentucky at (270)684-9025.

PROCEDURE:

1. After discussing the meanings of "current" the teacher tells the students that they are going to listen to a song (*Paradise*) about a river that flows through their own "backyard."
2. The teacher asks the students to listen closely to the song and notice how it makes them feel. Students should write down any lyrics or phrases that really catch their attention. The teacher asks, "Do any of the lyrics remind you of places or parts of Kentucky?"
3. The teacher plays *Paradise* by John Prine. After listening to the song (the students may want to hear it twice), the class discusses how the music may have made them feel. After discussing these feelings the class makes a list of lyrics, phrases or words that stand out, meant something to them, or reminded them of parts of Kentucky.
4. The teacher has the students pick a line of the song from a hat. The students work independently to draw a picture demonstrating the meaning of their line. The students will need to write their line at the bottom of their page. While the students work, the teacher plays a tape of various bluegrass songs.
5. In the order of the song, the students stand-up, read their lyric, and show their picture.
6. The teacher collects the pages and puts them together in a class book, to be shared throughout the year.

CLOSURE: Just like words have more than one meaning, music can have its own meaning to each person who listens to it. Our pictures help to illustrate how the lyrics we selected are special to each of us.

EVALUATION: The teacher evaluates the students through class discussions and by reviewing the students' drawings.

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EXTENSIONS:

1. The students could work in groups to write a song about water, including topics such as water pollution, the need for water, the sounds of water, or water habitats.
2. The students could work in groups to find another song that addresses another unique resource and demonstrate why it is important to people.
3. The class could take a trip to the Green River. While sitting on the bank next to the river the students could write about the water's natural music and express how it makes them feel by writing their own lyrics or a poem.

PARADISE

– John Prine

When I was a child, my family would travel
Down to Western Kentucky, where my parents were born
And there's a backwards old town, that's often remembered
So many times that my memories are worn

[Chorus:]

And daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County
Down by the Green River where Paradise lay
Well I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away

Well sometimes we'd travel right down the Green River
To the abandoned old prison down by Adrie Hill
Where the air smelled like snakes and we'd shoot our pistols
But empty pop bottles was all we would kill

[Chorus.]

Then the coal company came with the world's largest
shovel
And they tortured the timber and stripped all the land
Well, they dug for their coal till the land was forsaken
Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man

[Chorus.]

When I die, let my ashes float down the Green River
Let my soul roll on up to the Rochester Dam
I'll be halfway to heaven with Paradise waiting
Just five miles away from wherever I am

[Chorus.]

Paradise
John Prine

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